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GOLAKI SCHOOL OF ŚAIVISM UNDER THE IMPERIAL CŌḶAS

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The Cōḷa Kings, who were unquestionably staunch Śaivites, were renowned for their sincere patronage to Śaivism. The long history of the Cōḷas bears testimony to the fact that not only the rulers but also the ruled threw their might for the growth of various schools of Śaivism. Different sects of Śaivism and their institutions, in turn, influenced the life of the Tamils during this period.

The Śaiva cult, being one of the oldest and most widely spread cults in India, had developed many sects within its fold. Several of these wielded considerable influence and enjoyed varying degrees of patronage at different periods of the history of the Tamil Country. One such sect is the Golaki school of Śaivism which wielded considerable influence and enjoyed patronage during the period of the Cōḷas. Golaki Śaivism was a major wave of the religious movement that entered the land of the Tamils at the end of the 10th century A.D. An attempt is made, in this paper, to give a history of this sect in Tamilnadu.

The advent and spread of the Golaki sect and the existence of the *maṭhas* of this school in the Tamil Country are revealed by a number of inscriptions. It will not be out of context, if a brief note is given on the history of this school of Śaivism, before its spread and influence in the Tamil Country are taken up for study. The original Golaki *maṭha* has been identified with the monastery at Bhedaghat (R.B.Hiralal 1927) on the banks of the river Narmada. Sadbhavasambhu, the author of *Somasambhu Paddhati*, a work on *Śaivagama*, was its founder. The *maṭha* derived its name Golaki from *Golagiri*, the roundish hillock over which it was constructed. Thus the original name Golagiri *maṭha* in course of time got corrupted into Golaki *maṭha (Ibid)*. By about the third quarter of the 10th century, the *maṭha* had started some branches near Kalachuri. The most important among them were situated at Gorgi and Chandrehe. The priests of this school had affiliation to the Pāśupata sect.

The Kings of Malwa, Tripuri and Warangal, who were followers of the Pāśupata sect, endowed and patronised the Golaki *maṭha*. The *maṭha* and its branches became popular because they had learned scholars as their Heads and devotees from a wide area extending from Bengal to Malabar. Īśana Śiva, Rudrasambhu, Mattamayyranātha, Hridayaśiva, Agoraśiva, Viśvesvaraśiva and others

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were some of the Śivāchāryas of this school and their influence made the Golaki *maṭha* a popular institution of the age.

The epigraphs indicate that the Golaki line of teachers had already settled down in the Āndhra Country in the 10th century during the reign of the Noḷamba Pallava King Aṇṇayadeva, ruling around Anantpur (*ARE* 1916; 759). The appearance of the Golaki line of teachers in the Tamil Country was a sequel to the conquest of the eastern part of the Kannada Country by the imperial Cōḷa Kings (Rājarāja I and Rājēndra I). Some followers of the sect moved into the Cōḷa Country and received the patronage of the rulers and the subjects. When the sect had its gradual spread throughout the land, in this period, it also received patronage in the hands of the Pāṇḍyas of the 13th century.

Though the sect had its beginnings in the time of Rājarāja I, the existence of a regular line of teachers is distinctly noticed only from the reign of his son Rājēndra I. It is already known that Rājēndra imported Śaiva teachers from the banks of the Ganges into his own kingdom and established them in Kanchipuram and in the Cōḷa Country (Sastri 1955; 210). The *Lakṣadhyāyi (Bhikṣa) santāna* was the prominent lineage of this sect, the existence of which is noticed from the times of Rājēndra I and continued to flourish even in the 13th century. Other lineages of this sect were the *gñānamrtacārya santāna*, the *Nandikeśvara santāna* and the *Kiḷaimaṭha santāna*. Some preceptors of the *Lakṣādhyāyi santāna* had affiliation with the *maṭhas* of Varanasi in the 12th and the 13th centuries. The preceptors of the *Gñānamrtacarya santāna* had their activities mainly centering around Tiruvālīśvaram in Tirunelveli district, in the 13th century A.D. The *Nandikésvara* and the *Kiḷai maṭha santānas* had their origin in the 13th century. Tiruvoṟṟiyūr, Tirukkaḷukkuṉram, Palur, Tiruppachchur in the Chingleput district; Tiruvaṇṇāmalai, Tiruvoṭṭiūr in the North Arcot district; Mēlaiccēri, Chidambaram, Tirunāmanallūr in the South Arcot district; Jambukeśvaram, Tirumaṅgalam, Ratnagiri in the Tiruchirāppaḷḷi district; Kīḷaiyūr, Tiruvārūr, Tirukkaṇṇapuram, Tirukkaḍaiyūr, Tiruvāḍuturai, Kuṭṭālam, Tirukkoḍikkāval, Śivapuram in the Thanjavur district; Tiruppattūr in Ramnad district; Madurai, Tirupparaṅkuṉram, Vīrapāṇḍi, Vikkiramaṅgalam in the Madurai district; Manappaḍaivīḍu, Patamadai, Sērmādēvi, Tiruvālīśvaram, Tinnelvēli, Giriyambalpuram in the Tirunelveli district and Sermadevi in Coimbatore district were the various centres wherefrom the preceptors of the Golaki sect functioned through their institutions, viz., Golaki *maṭhas*. (Sivaprakasam 1983: 62-70).

The preceptors of Golaki school who were active in different parts of the Tamil Country, in this period, were initially called *ācaryas* and later came to be known as *mudaliyārs*. It may be observed that the replacement of the titles of *ācāryas* by *mudaliyārs* was no doubt due to the influence of Tamil Śaiva *maṭhas* of *mudaliyār* lineages which appeared in large number in the 13th. century A.D.

The *maṭhas* of this school which provided the institutional basis for the sect were the potent factors for the spread of the Golaki Śaivism throughout the Tamil Country. Their

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role as propagators of religious thought and practices in collaboration with temples is well attested to by the contemporary epigraphs. The Śaivācāryas dedicated themselves to the propagation of Golaki *dharma* which incorporated in itself the *Suddaśaiva* philosophy *(Ibid)*. Adept in the mysteries of the Śaiva faith and well versed in the Śaiva doctrine, they imparted religious instruction to their disciples and disseminated the knowledge pertaining to the sect. To attract the religious minded populace, they played a prominent role in arranging for rituals and festivals in collaboration with temples. They undertook the recital of many other religious texts to integrate the masses into the Śaiva fold. The pontiffs and the disciples contributed in large measure to the conduct of regular worship and offerings to the deity in the temple. In fact, the Golaki *maṭhas*, as the *maṭhas* of the other Śaiva sects of the period, provided the institutional basis for the *Bhakti* ideology. The Tamil epigraphs of the 12th and 13th centuries bear ample evidence to the above.

The Golaki *maṭhas* gradually acquired more and more resources by virtue of land grants and other benefactions conferred on them by the people of various social ranks, from the members of the royal families down to the commoners. It is but natural that the preceptors, who were already erudite scholars, attained prominence. They had more and more associations with the temples, not only in the rituals and festivals but also in the administration. Instances are there to show how their influence over the temple gradually increased to the extent of taking active part in the temple administration. A record from Tirukkadaiyūr (12th century A.D.) \ *(ARE* 1906; 40) mentions that one Swāmidēvar cancelled an order of the King appointing two Śaiva priests and put in two others who possessed hereditary rights to the office. This example bears evidence for the growing influence of the pontiffs of the sect, which increased in the 12th century to such an extent that he could cancel an order of the King in order to keep up the traditions and regulations in the temple administration. Not only the pontiffs, even the ordinary monks of the sect, the Maheśvaras, evinced keen interest in the temple affairs and sometimes they figured prominently among the executives of the temples. An interesting example, in this regard, is provided by an inscription of Rājarāja III *(ARE* 1922: 537). During the reign of this King, when the resources at the disposal of the Rāmanandīśvara temple at Tirukkaṇṇapuram were inadequate to meet the expenses of the festivals and worship, the *Maheśvaras* of the Perumbaṟṟappuliyūr (Chidambaram) at the instance of the temple officials, raised funds by the gift of annual payment of money and paddy collected from various temple servants in Cōḻamaṇḍalam, Rājarāja Pāṇḍimaṇḍalam, Vīra Cōḻamaṇḍalam, Nāḍuvil-nāḍu and Jayaṅkoṇḍacōḻamaṇḍalam.

Through their educational, welfare and charitable activities the Golaki *maṭhas* and their preceptors consolidated the social basis of Śaivism, particularly, the sect. The services rendered by the Golaki *maṭhas* and their preceptors in the field of education are borne out by a few inscriptions. In the *maṭhas* at Tirukkundai Sihaggiyatturai (probably Tiruviḍaikkaḷi), provision was made for the education of certain Brāhmana students

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of *Vedanta* from the Malayalam Country (*ARE* 1925: 276). It is evident, here, that this *maṭha* attracted scholars from outside the state. The preceptor of the *maṭha* (Mudivalangum perumal matha) in Śēr..ādēvi was an expert in the *śāstras* and th's *maṭha* flourished as an important institution and provided instruction in various *śāstras* to students (*ARE* 1916: 667, 671, 675). A certain Tatpurushaśiva, the preceptor of the *maṭha* at Tiruvanaikka Koil was a professor of Saiva *Siddhānta* who imparted the same to his disciples (*ARE* 1891: 21). Guru Someśvara, also called Īśvara śiva, the preceptor of Kulōttuṅga III, was a great scholar well versed in eighteen *vidyas* (*Śiva-darṣanas*). He was capable of expounding the glory of Śiva as taught in the *Upanishads*. He is said to have written a work called the *Siddhāntaratnākara* (*SII* XXIII: 190).

The *maṭhas* of this sect looked after the public welfare and particularly looked after the large masses of Śaivite pilgrims who were on their itinerant programmes to various Śaiva centres. The feeding service was conducted in the *maṭhas* daily and during the festival occasions in the temples. This scheme enabled the preceptors and the monks to distribute food among the devotees, ascetics and others who visited the temple. The epigraphical references pertaining to the feeding service in the *maṭhas* are quite many. The provisions were made for feeding the monks, ascetics, Brāhmaṇas, andars, devotees, temple servants, apurvins, itinerant ascetics, pilgrims, reciters, students and others irrespective of caste and social distinctions. Villages, plots of land, paddy and money were donated for the purpose by the Kings and royal dignitaries, the officers, the assembly, the individuals, t village headmen, the temple servan the dancing girls and the guil

The sect met with greater r ponse from the society. The Kir the queens, the feudatories, the of cials, the assemblies, the comm people and the merchants and th guilds had all extended their patrona in the guise of construction a endowment of land, cash and ki to the Śaiva *maṭhas* and their Hea It is not surprising to note that b the rulers and the ruled held t Heads and the disciples of this s in high esteem and reverence their spiritual affiliation. In f some of the preceptors functior as *Rājagurus*. The Cōḷas were initia into the sect by their royal precept (*Rājagurus*). The names of the prec tors of a few Cōḷa Kings are kno from epigraphs. The Thanjavur tem record (*SII*, II, No.90) refers to certain Īśanaśiva as the precep of Rājarāja I. Another record fr the same temple (*Ibid*, no. 20) menti Sarvaśiva as the preceptor Rājēndra I.

Kulōttuṅga III had arranged the consecration ceremony of Ś and Pārvati in the temple of T bhuvanavīreśwaram temple at T bhuvanam, performed by his *g* Someśvara (*ARE* 1907; 190-19 He was the son of Śrīkaṇṭa Sam who is identified with Swāmidē Śrīkaṇṭa Śiva who was a contempor of Vikramachōḷa. Rājarāja III gifted villages, tax free, to hon Swāmidēvar who was the prece of the Cōḷa and Pāṇḍya Kings XVII, 692).

It is interesting to note t the name Swāmidēvar was adop by a successive line of pontiffs

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preceptors who acted as advisers on matters, mostly religious, that were brought to their attention by the Kings of the various dynasties of South India including the Cōḷas. In this context it should be remembered that the preceptors of this sect were the *Rājagurus* of the Kings of Cheḍi, Kākatiya and other dynasties.

To sum up, the Cōḷa Period witnessed the spread of the Golaki school in the Tamil Country as a sequel to the imperial conquests of Rājarāja I and Rājēndra I. in the northern territories. This sect which had flourishing institutions headed by learned preceptors and their devoted monks, proliferated throughout the land of the Tamils. Its proliferation was due to the missionary zeal of its preceptors and their disciples and also due to the munificent support extended by the Cōḷa rulers and the religious minded populace in the period.

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